



About Gitameit Music Center

In Pali and Burmese “gita” means music, and “meit” means friendship.

Gitameit Music Center is a non-profit community center and music school located in downtown Rangoon, Burma (Yangon, Myanmar). Gitameit opened in 2003 and is the only non-governmental, non-denominational music school in a country of 60 million. Gitameit is supported, in part, by Foundation for the People of Burma.

Gitameit was started with the goal of building a supportive community of musicians and audiences locally, and to encourage sustained, meaningful contact with international institutions, teachers and performers. Gitameit Music Center is devoted to music teaching, nurturing, and performing. Through Gitameit, Burmese students are given opportunities to study music abroad and are exposed to international artists and teachers who are invited to Rangoon for performances and workshops.

Musical offerings at Gitameit are holistic. That is, the programs and projects incorporate study of western music genres (classical, jazz, rock, pop, contemporary art music), Burmese traditional and folk music, and a program of listening to and learning about music genres from all over the world. In addition, musicians are encouraged to learn about other art forms - poetry, theatre, literature, and plastic arts - to further extend the possibilities of their imagination.

A year ago, on May 2, 2008, the worst natural disaster ever recorded in Burma made landfall, killing nearly 150,000 people, impacting 2.4 million (according to the UN) and destroyed hundreds of thousands of homes, schools, monasteries and public buildings. In response to the devastation students at the Gitameit Music Center transformed their school into the center of operations for Foundation for the People of Burma's relief and rebuilding efforts, becoming an integral piece of the relief effort that reached over 170,000 people.

In commemoration of the first anniversary of Cyclone Nargis the Gitameit Choir is traveling to the United States for a cultural tour and concert. This first-ever American tour by a Burmese choir will include a visit to the San Francisco Bay Area and East Coast with a performance at a benefit concert for Foundation for the People of Burma alongside special guest Joan Baez on May 1, 2009 at Cowell Theater in San Francisco.

The cultural tour will include music education, leadership development and training on community development. In addition to their music and relief work, these young adults are dedicated to social change in their native Burma, but have little exposure to the various forms of civil society participation widely practiced in the US.